

Dear Co-Chairs Helms and Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water:

My name is Kate McMichael. I am a small woodland owner, living in Lane County, and I am writing today in support of HB 2408 and full funding for the OSU Statewides.

Six years ago this month, my wife and I were in the midst of transferring our retirement savings to pay for 39 acres of forestland in Vida. After decades of over-committed, over-peopled work lives, we were looking forward to a quiet retirement, where we would finally have empty calendars and time to enjoy being with our trees as they sequestered and stored carbon. We were long-time wilderness lovers and backpackers and the prospect of having a bit of forest of our own was the realization of a long-held dream. That said, as former educators, we had an inkling that no matter how deeply we cared *about* the forest (both ours and forests in general), we didn't know all there was to know about caring *for* one—and therefore we sought some education. That led us to our local Extension office. Our Extension Forester walked our property with us, explained what we were seeing in our healthy but messy (to our eyes) forest. We took a class—and then another and another. It turned out we had a lot—a *lot*—to learn and that all our years of loving “the woods” aside, we really didn't have a clue about caring for a forest. (An aside here: all Oregonians legitimately care *about* our beautiful forests; most Oregonians—like us, pre-Extension—have little idea what caring *for* our forests actually entails.)

Then September 2020 happened. The Holiday Farm Fire roared through our forest, leaving scorched, fire-twisted trees in its wake. From some of the fire killed trees in our oldest stand, strips of flagging tape—from a thinning exercise that was part of a field trip hosted on our property the previous December—hung, limp but still there, a sad reminder of the line that separates *before* from *after* of a life altering event.

Since the fire, we have been on a crash course in the long-term venture that is forest management. Particularly keen—and eye-opening—for us is the interplay of post-fire recovery, reforestation, and the complexities of weather, climate, seed sources, and the sad discovery (over the course of three replants) that Douglas-fir isn't really as happy on our forest now as three-plus decades ago when our fire killed trees were planted. (In fact, the tag-line of our management plan is actually “experiments in post-fire reforestation in changing climate.”) The web of relationships between seedlings and forests and the infrastructure that is necessary to provide for building materials and other forest products many of us use daily without considering their source—or all the hands and steps and skill-sets, the science and technology, that bring them to us—has moved from the periphery of our consciousness to the center.

And it is here that the OSU Statewides are vital. Extension agents excel at translating science into something that has boots-on-the-ground relevance—and they take back questions and conundrums from landowners to researchers so that they have foci for study that really matter. For us, our Extension agent has been a vital connecting link: not only connecting us to the best science as we seek to both accompany and assist our forest on its journey back to health and resilience, but pushing us to make connections as well: to meet our ODF stewardship forester so that we know we're following all the rules; to explore certification to support and celebrate our passion for sustainability. We are proud to be certified through the Oregon Tree Farm System, to have not only management objectives but a mandate to care for our property according to internationally recognized sustainability standards.

Our quiet retirement has taken quite a turn. We continue to actively take classes through Extension. We have connected with the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest upriver from us and also fire-scarred. We are active members of WOWNet: the Women Owning Woodlands

Network. We have benefitted from the OSU Fire Program. We have attended Tree Schools, both in person (and throughout the state) and virtually. (In fact, we took nearly every Tree School Online course offered throughout the pandemic—and refer others to them as an outstanding resource.) We are in the process of becoming Woodland Pollinator Stewards. And, this past year, we became Master Woodland Managers, so that we can volunteer in our local woodland community, providing assistance to our Extension Agent and giving back a portion of the knowledge and care and time that has been so generously shared with us. I currently serve on the Oregon Small Woodlands Association Board, both statewide and in my local chapter. I am on the Oregon Tree Farm System Board. I am state President of Oregon Women in Timber, a forestry education focused nonprofit that benefits all Oregon schoolchildren from pre-K to 8th grade. I am in my second term as Landowner at Large on the ODF Committee for Family Forestlands, which offers counsel to the Board of Forestry on issues of importance and concern to family forest landowners. And all of this can be traced back to our Extension Forester.

Our story is ours, but we are not unique. Every landowner—forestry or ag or with a patch of garden in their backyard or on a widow ledge—can tell a similar story about the vitally important role played by the OSU Statewides—an Ag Research Station, a Research forest, an Extension agent, a Master Gardener, a 4-H leader—in inspiring their leadership in the community, in helping them care not just about but for their land in the best manner possible. Oregon can be justifiably proud of what is made possible by the OSU Statewides. The HB 2408 ask will make it possible to maintain current service levels rather than losing positions that can have—that has had, that *does* have—a devastating impact on the counties effected. The additional ask is for programs that are a direct result of working with landowners and listening to them as they seek to be better stewards, to use their already working lands to work harder and smarter for the sake of all Oregonians.

Fully funding the OSU Statewides is an investment not only in rural Oregonians; it is an investment in Oregon. Please invest in our forests, our farms, our ranches and vineyards. Please invest in research and innovation, in education and recreation, in food and forests and forest products. Please invest in Oregon's ability to nourish, nurture, house, employ and inspire our children today and their children's children into the future. Please support HB 2408 and fully fund the OSU Statewides.

Thank you.